

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

**28<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME – UPDATE**

**To provide an update on the need for additional grant funding for the West Kent Leader Programme and funding to enable the Leader team to remain in operation to prepare a bid for the next round of RDPE funding from 2015.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 As Members will be aware from previous reports to this Board, this Council and other partners have been lobbying Ministers and DEFRA on two key issues of concern:

- the need for additional grant funding for the Leader programme for 2013/14 to enable continued support to be offered to those applying for grant support for rural schemes. The current available funding has now been fully spent in contrast to some other programmes in other parts of the country who have so far failed to spend their allocations;
- should no further grant funding be available, the need for some transitional funding being made available to enable the West Kent Leader team to remain in place in order to prepare for bids to be submitted for the next round of Leader funding from 2015.

**1.2 Update**

1.2.1 Two letters responding to the above issues have now been received by Local Action Group Chairmen. These are attached as Annexes 1 and 2 to this report.

1.2.2 The first letter, from the RDPE (Rural Development Programme England) delivery team at DEFRA, confirms that it is unlikely that any further grant funding will be allocated to the more successful existing LAG groups, including that for West Kent. Whilst the response still leaves the door open to additional grant, this would appear only to be entertained on the basis that there is a danger that the 5% target would not be met (that is that at least 5% of all RDPE monies received by Government should be spent on local Leader programmes). It appears that, due

to Government funding pressures generally, any underspends across Leader programmes will be retained centrally. It is interesting to note that some other EU countries have committed up to 25% of the RDPE monies on Leader programmes.

- 1.2.3 The second letter, from Sir David Health MP, is more positive in that there is a possibility of some transitional funding being made available to enable Leader teams to continue to operate and prepare for the new Leader round of bidding potentially available, subject to the EU agreeing its overall budgets, by 2015. Local Leader groups have to bid for such funding and the West Kent team are now preparing the ground for such a bid to be made.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

- 1.3.1 None

### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.4.1 As set out above.

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

- 1.5.1 Without further project and/or transitional funding being made available, the West Kent Programme will need to be closed a year earlier than originally planned. This will result in a loss of continuity between this programme and any successor programme.

### **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.6.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of this report.

### **1.7 Recommendations**

- 1.7.1 That proposals to apply for Leader transitional funding **BE SUPPORTED** and that a further report on progress with developing a new Leader Programme from 2015 **BE MADE** to a future meeting of the Board.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Grants are awarded on the basis of economic and social benefit only.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*